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"Africa Overview" input

¶1. Al-Shabaab extremists, supported by members of al-Qa'ida, continued to present a serious terrorist threat to American and allied interests throughout the Horn of Africa. Due to ongoing fighting between al-Shabaab, Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG), and other armed factions within the country, Somalia remained highly unstable, offering a permissive environment for terrorist transit, training and organization. Foreign fighters and al-Qa'ida operatives continued to live and work inside Somalia. Counterterrorism forces killed al-Qa'ida senior leader Saleh Ali Nabhan in al-Shabaab controlled territory in mid-September. Nabhan was an associate of Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, aka Harun Fazul, one of several al-Qa'ida leaders charged with carrying out the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

Kenya

¶2. Cross-border kidnappings and arms smuggling, reports of extremist recruiting within refugee camps and Kenyan cities, increased allegations of terrorist plotting, and public threats by al-Shabaab leaders led to a heightened recognition among government officials, the diplomatic community and civil society that Kenya is vulnerable to terrorist attacks. Whereas Kenyans have traditionally perceived terrorism as primarily a 'foreign' problem, during the past year an increasing number of Kenyan citizens and government officials came to recognize that their own country and society are also threatened by violent extremists.

¶3. Al-Shabaab's continued dominance of most of southern Somalia provided a permissive environment for al-Qa'ida to conduct training and terrorist planning. Although the Kenya-Somalia border officially remained closed large numbers of refugees continued to flee to refugee camps in Kenya in order to escape the fighting and drought. Armed militants also crossed the porous border into Kenya to obtain supplies, funding, medical care, and recruits. There was a disturbing increase in incidents of armed Somalis crossing the border to kidnap foreigners inside Kenya. In July gunmen claiming to belong to al-Shabaab kidnapped three foreign aid workers, including one American, inside Kenya and took them back to Somalia. The militants released the hostages in October, reportedly after payment of a ransom. This followed the February release of two Italian nuns who had been kidnapped from the Kenyan border town of El Wak in late 2008. In mid-December armed Somalis attempted to kidnap an Italian nun working in the northeastern town of Wajir but were driven off by Kenyan police.

¶ 14. Despite increased concern over security, the lack of counterterrorism and anti-money laundering legislations continued to hinder Kenya's efforts to combat violent extremism. Existing laws did not permit police to detain terrorist suspects and prosecute them effectively. The government did not submit a revised version of counterterrorism legislation that was defeated in 2006. In December the Kenyan Parliament passed the "Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering Bill" for combating money laundering and terrorist financing but the measure still awaited the president's signature at year's end.

¶ 15. Kenya did demonstrate increased political will to prevent infiltration into the country and apprehend suspected terrorists. The government took steps to increase security along the Kenya/Somalia border and track down extremists operating inside the country.

¶ 16. The United States continued to enjoy close and productive ties with the Kenyan Armed Forces. During the year the United States provided training and equipment to the Kenya Navy for coastal security and maritime domain awareness. Equipment grants included six coastal radar sites and three Defender class patrol boats, plus training and spare parts for existing equipment. The United States also assisted the Kenyan Army to train and equip two Infantry Battalions and one Ranger Strike Force company tasked with providing border security. Training for the Ranger Strike Force is based in part on the curriculum for the U.S. Army Ranger Course.

¶ 17. Kenyan law enforcement agencies also worked with the United States and other allies to increase their counterterrorism abilities. Security along Kenya's land and maritime borders remained a primary focus of these efforts. The Kenyan Maritime Police Unit (MPU) and other agencies not only received equipment and training for coastal security from the State Department's Antiterrorism Assistance program (ATA) but also demonstrated an increasing degree of self-sufficiency. During the latest iterations of ATA's 11-week Comprehensive Maritime Security Training program previous graduates of the course served as associate instructors. ATA-trained Kenyan personnel also developed and presented a basic two-week maritime operations course which they taught to students from multiple security agencies at the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Marine Camp in Malindi. In December the U.S. Ambassador formally turned over three donated patrol boats for use by the MPU and Administrative Police (AP) coastal security forces. Other ATA courses provided training in border control management, fraudulent travel documents, protecting digital infrastructure, and internet investigations. ATA also provided digital forensic equipment and training to the Kenyan Police Service (KPS).

¶ 18. The U.S. Department of Justice conducted a number of training activities through the offices of the Resident Legal Advisor and Senior Law Enforcement Advisor aimed at building the capacity of police and prosecutors. This included courses in trial advocacy, witness protection, trafficking in persons, forensic and digital evidence, cyber crimes, and piracy. In December Kenya and ten other regional countries participated in a U.S. Dept of Justice sponsored regional conference on combating criminal organizations, including terrorist groups. Conference topics included terrorist financing, cooperation between intelligence and law enforcement agencies, electronic evidence gathering, and legal regimes. The FBI also provided training and equipment to the KPS, the AP, and the KWS. Training activities included courses in crime scene investigation and terrorist finance, and money laundering. Equipment grants included fingerprint kits and gyro-stabilized binoculars for use in air surveillance operations.

¶19. In July and August officers from the Department of Homeland Security/Customs and Border Protection (DHS/CBP) provided specialized training and equipment to the newly established AP border patrol unit and the KWS. In September ATA funded a study tour for AP and KWS personnel to observe CBP operations along the Mexican-American border and to meet with State Department and Department of Homeland Security officials in the nation's capitol. The CBP plans additional training opportunities for the AP's Border Patrol Unit and KWS in the future.

¶10. Embassy POC for this CRT is Samuel Madsen, madsensa@state.gov
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